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304 [429] Among the Rifians of the Ait Waryager circumcision often takes place on the twelfth day of the month of the Mulud, "the day of the feast", at least when the family is fairly well-to-do, and it is performed by an expert, accompanying a band of scribes. It is considered of importance that there should be scribes present to make recitations from the Koran in the room where the operation is made. This is not the room inhabited by the boy's own family—which on this occasion is occupied by the women—but another room in the same house; the Ait Waryager live in houses containing several rooms, each of which is inhabited by one family. On the day when the boy is circumcised his father kills a sheep or a goat or, if he cannot afford that, some fowls; the scribes have to be entertained with food, and rewarded with money as well. Contrary to the custom at Aglu, the father is present in the room where the boy is circumcised, but not the mother. The boy is dressed in new clothes, a belt (rahzam) is wound round the top of his head, and just before the operation is performed his eyes are blackened with antimony. If his father is a man of means, a silver bangle (ahalhal) is also put round the boy's ankle, or round each of his ankles, and is left there until he grows older, to be used again for the next son when he is circumcised. The wounded part of the penis is dipped into the yolk of an egg, which is then thrown away. The foreskin is put in some "clean" place, where nobody can walk over it. The boy is removed to his father's room, where he is confined for seven days.

[434] RITES AND BELIEFS CONNECTED WITH DEATH

763 If a person is very ill and his death is held to be immanent, his near relatives living in the same town or village assemble in the room in which he is lying. Should any of them fail to appear, the family of the dying person would look upon it as a sign of enmity and would make it a cause of quarrel. In country places a message may also be sent to relatives in neighbouring villages, who likewise hasten to the death-bed of their friend. No menstruating woman, however, should enter the room, nor any woman who has omitted to clean herself after sexual intercourse.

If the family of the dying person can afford it scribes are called in to recite a chapter of the Koran, unless some one of the assembled

763 friends is capable of performing this task. The recitation should be continued till the moment of death, but no longer, its object being to shorten the agony. The chapter considered most suitable for this occasion is the suratu 'r-ra'd, which is called s-sahliya because it makes death easier. For a similar purpose a little honey is put into the mouth of the dying person, and at the last moment some water is dripped into it to moisten his throat. If his teeth are clenched, which is sometimes supposed to indicate that he has led a sinful life (Ait Waryager), some cotton or [435] wool is soaked in water mixed with honey and then pressed against his teeth.

When life is extinct, or sometimes when a person is at the point of death, his eyes and mouth, if open, are closed. It is believed that if he dies with open eyes or, at all events, if they are left open, somebody else of his family or kin will die before long (Shawia, Tangier, Andjra, Ait Waryager, Ait Sadden).

[436] Among the Ait Waryager, also, the women of the family and those who come to condole only weep in another room.

[442] As soon as the death becomes known it is the custom for friends to pay a visit of condolence to the family of the deceased.

[443] Among the Ait Waryager the women who come to the house bring flour, while the male condolers assist the men of the family in their preparations for the funeral.

764 Very shortly after death the body of the deceased is washed, at least if he died at so early an hour that the burial can take place on the same day.

[445] The body is washed with warm water, and certain parts of it with soap or scented soap-stone (gasul). The person who performs the act, after washing his own hands, says the bismillah and states inwardly his intention to wash the dead one: — Allahumma inni nawit gasl l-miyit . He then washes the genital region very carefully with a towel, which is left there. He washes the lips and the teeth three times, and the nose the same number of times. All these parts of the body are washed with the left hand. He washes with both hands the face and the right and the left hand and arm to the elbow, all three times. He passes his wet hands once from the forehead to the nape and back again. After again wetting his fingers he puts the forefingers into the ears and passes the thumbs behind their backs. Taking water with the right hand he washes with the left the feet as